



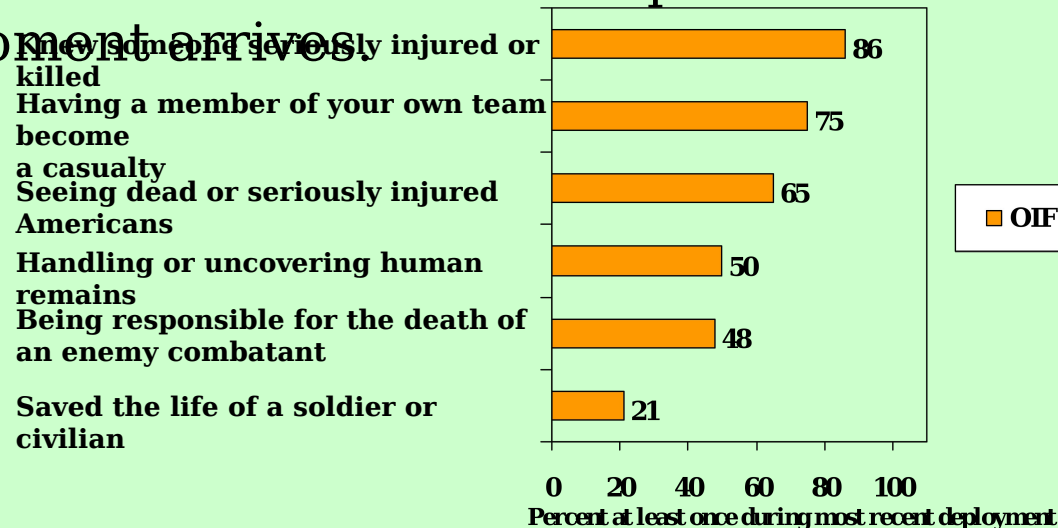
10 Unpleasant Facts About Combat and what Leaders can do to change them



The Nature of Combat

Realities of Combat:

- Combat is sudden, intense, and life threatening.
- It is the job of the Soldier to kill the enemy.
- Innocent women and children are often killed in combat.
- No Soldier knows how he will perform in combat until the moment arrives.





The Development of Battlemind: *“MTXE”*

What is battlemind?

A Soldier's inner strength to face adversity, fear, and hardship during combat with confidence and resolution. It is the will to persevere and win.

Objectives of Battlemind:

To develop those factors (focusing on Leader behaviors) that contribute to the Soldier's will and spirit to fight and win in combat, thereby reducing **combat stress reactions**.

“Rank has one object, to enable the officer [including the NCO] to fulfill his responsibilities .”

GEN Bruce Clark, 1963



Unpleasant Fact #1

**Fear in combat is
common.**



Reality and Actions #1

Findings:

Over two-thirds of silver star recipients reported an increase in fear as the battle progressed.

Common symptoms of fear include: violent shaking or trembling, losing control of bowels, feeling weak, having cold sweats, and vomiting.

Fear and anxiety are reduced in combat when Soldiers engage in actions derived from their training experiences.

What Leaders Can Do:

Drill and train Soldiers in specific actions to take under combat conditions.

Provide Soldiers sufficient time to recover physically and mentally from combat.

Admitting and joking about fear will release tension.

Remember that fear is NOT a mental disorder.



Battlemind Concept #1

Even heroes feel fear.



Unpleasant Fact #2

**Unit members
will be injured
and killed.**



Reality and Actions #2

Findings:

Over 2,100 service members have been killed since OIF/OEF began.

Over 14,000 service members have been wounded in Iraq since OIF/OEF began.

Soldiers were angry when Leaders failed to show they cared about their combat experiences, especially ones involving injuries or death.

What Leaders Can Do:

Ensure that Soldiers don't assume unnecessary risks when conducting missions.

Conduct mental health debriefings led by mental health professionals or chaplains. Soldiers report them to be helpful.

Conduct memorial services with the utmost respect and dignity.



Battlemind Concept #2

Every Soldier is entitled to go into combat with the best chance of survival that you as his or her leader can provide.



Unpleasant Fact #3

**There will be
communication
and information
breakdown.**



Reality and Actions #3

Findings:

Soldiers report that deployment policies are often inconsistently applied.

Soldiers often report that they don't know the status of wounded Soldiers.

Soldiers make up rumors if leaders don't tell them the facts.

Telling soldiers you don't know is better than not telling them anything at all.

What Leaders Can Do:

Keep your Soldiers informed.

Make sure that your policies and views on all matters are clearly expressed and made known.

Let every Soldier in the unit know the status of wounded evacuees.



Battlemind Concept #3

***Effective
communication is the
responsibility of the
leader.***



Unpleasant Fact #4

**Soldiers frequently
perceive failures in
Leadership.**



Reality and Actions #4

Findings:

Good leadership is linked to high Soldier morale and cohesion, and to fewer mental health problems.

Soldiers report that frequently leaders engage in actions to enhance their own career and personal well-being.

Soldiers also report that leaders often fail to exhibit clear thinking and reasonable action when under stress.

What Leaders Can Do:

Allow subordinates to seek clarification of orders or policies without being defensive or considering the Soldier disloyal.

Remove those subordinate leaders or Soldiers who fail to measure up. Reassign or demote them, you owe this to assure the success and safety of your Soldiers in combat.



Battlemind Concept #4

***Courage and valor in
combat and in all
matters are the
measures of Soldier
and leader
performance, never
personal gain.***



Unpleasant Fact #5

**Combat
impacts every
Soldier
mentally and
emotionally.**



Reality and Actions #5

Findings:

Combat stress reactions involve any symptom (physical, mental, behavioral) and occur when a Soldier becomes overwhelmed with the stressors of combat.

Over 95% of Soldiers who receive forward mental health support are returned to duty.

Treatment in rear areas can lead to evacuation syndrome.

DMHS or CSC Units	96%
Combat Support Hospital-Iraq	67%
Combat Support Hospital-Kuwait	11%
LMRC Regional Medical Center	4%

What Leaders Can Do :

Ensure that Soldiers have access to mental health professionals as close to their unit as possible.

Conduct Buddy-Aid mental health training so Soldiers can assist other Soldiers in coping with the stress of combat.



Battlemind Concept #5

Combat stress reactions should be viewed as combat injuries.



Unpleasant Fact #6

**Combat often
leads to lasting
adverse mental
health effects.**

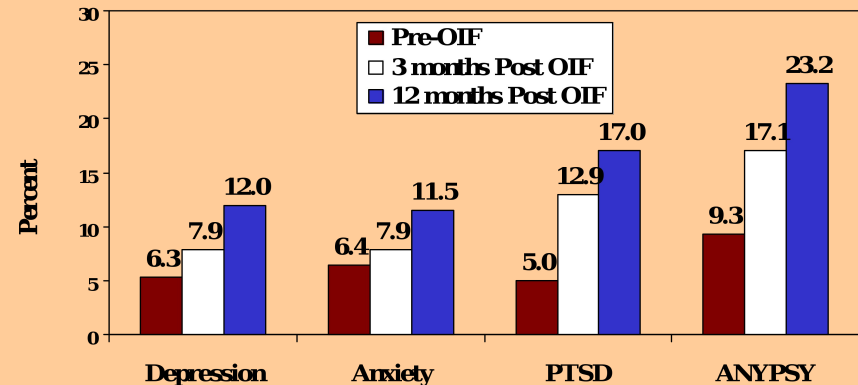


Reality and Actions #6

Findings:

PTSD symptoms are common after combat (10-20% of Soldiers) and often lead to excessive alcohol use and aggression.

Symptoms of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) include: feeling tense and angry, nightmares, flashbacks, and inability to express feelings about traumatic



What Leaders Can Do:

Don't view PTSD as a disease but rather a fairly common result of combat.

Ensure that Soldiers get help, as earlier treatment leads to faster recovery.



Battlemind Concept #6

***It takes courage to ask
for mental health
support.***



Unpleasant Fact #7

**Soldiers are
afraid to admit
that they have a
mental health
problem.**



Reality and Actions #7

Findings:

Only 25-40% of Soldiers with mental health problems get help because they report numerous stigmatizing beliefs regarding their unit members and leadership.

I would be seen as weak

65

My unit leadership might treat me differently

63

Members of my unit might have less confidence in me

59

My leaders would blame me for the problem

51

It would harm my career

50

□ 6 months Post OIF

0 20 40 60 80 100
Percent Agree or Strongly Agree

What Leaders Can Do:

Establish a command climate where leaders acknowledge that Soldiers are under stress and that they might need help.

Co-locate mental health assets at the battalion aid station/TMC.

Insist that mental health outreach be provided to each battalion.



Battlemind Concept #6

Admitting to a mental health problem is not a character flaw.



Unpleasant Fact #8

**Deployments
place a
tremendous
strain on
families.**



Reality and Actions #8

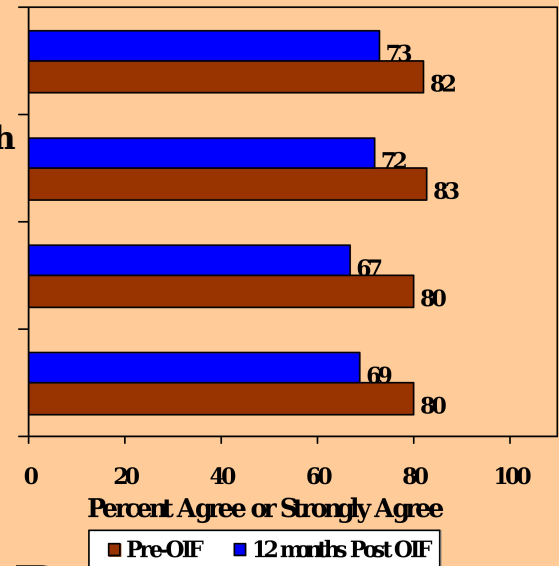
Findings:

Nearly one-fifth of all Soldiers deployed to OIF reported marital concerns or problems.

Marital satisfaction declined after deploying to OIF.

Soldiers generally report dissatisfaction with the FRG and rear detachment.

I have a good marriage
My relationship with my spouse makes me happy
My relationship with my spouse is very stable
I really feel like a part of a team with my spouse



What Leaders Can Do:

Assess any reported problems in the FRG or rear detachment to ensure timely action.

Do not allow family problems to go unanswered. Assign at least one of your staff to serve as an ombudsman or expediter of family problems.

Formally recognize all special family occasions such as births and graduations.



Battlemind Concept #8

“When a Soldier is at war, his or her mind should be at peace.”

Lord Moran, 1945



Unpleasant Fact #9

The combat environment is harsh and demanding.



Reality and Actions #9

Findings:

Soldiers' performance progressively deteriorates with less than 8 hours of sleep per day.

The combat environment (e.g., physical strain, heat, noise, lack of privacy) takes a toll on all Soldiers.

Soldiers are extremely sensitive to perceived inequalities in MWR resource distribution.

What Leaders Can Do:

Ensure adequate rest (>8 hours of sleep), hydration and other force health protections.

Insist on a fair distribution of MWR resources. Prevent double standards among officers, NCOs and Junior Enlisted Soldiers.

Be aware of the physical condition and sleep patterns of your Soldiers and insist that physical conditioning is maintained throughout the deployment.



Battlemind Concept #9

***Recognize the limits of
your Soldiers'
fortitude.***



Unpleasant Fact #10

**Combat poses
moral and
ethical
challenges.**



Reality and Actions #10

Combat exposes the reality of death.

Combat tests the character of Leaders and Soldiers.

Findings:

Receiving small arms fire

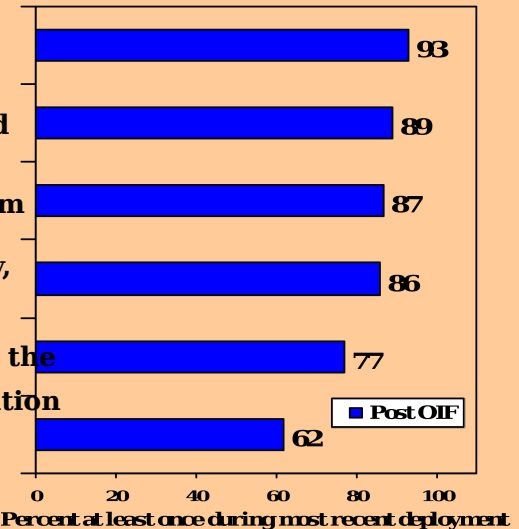
Being attacked or ambushed

Having hostile reactions from civilians

Receiving incoming artillery, rockets, mortars

Shooting or directing fire at the enemy

Being in a threatening situation where you were unable to respond because of rules of engagement



What Leaders Can Do:

Reward and recognize Soldiers on a regular basis for their personal sacrifices. Tell them when they done a good job.

Do not allow harassment or mistreatment of your Soldiers.

Discuss the moral implications of Soldiers' behavior in combat, and how individual sacrifice contributes to the enduring freedom of fighting for America.



Battlemind Concept #10

***Every Soldier needs to
come home with a
story that he or she
can live with.***



The American Soldier

“The capacity of Soldiers for absorbing punishment and enduring privations is almost inexhaustible so long as they believe they are getting a square deal, that their commanders are looking out for them, and that their own accomplishments are understood and appreciated.”

GEN Dwight Eisenhower, 1944



Point of Contact & Disclaimer

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